

**TESTIMONY OF
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**BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

Hearing on the FAIR Ratings Act (S. 1372)

July 27, 2005

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

My name is Ceril Shagrin. I spent 27 years at Nielsen Media Research during which time I interacted with the Media Rating Council (MRC) and the Ernst and Young auditors. I was Nielsen's first Quality Assurance Director and the primary contact for the review of the audit scope and the audit report. While at Nielsen Media I was a primary participant in the development and roll out of the National People Meter Service, responsible for the development and management of Nielsen Hispanic Services and involved in the development, testing and rollout of all new services.

For the past six years I have been employed by Univision Communications where I oversee the research needs for all the Univision divisions.

Currently I am the Chairman of the MRC Television Committee. I am proud to be this year's recipient of the Malcolm Beville Award for my commitment to the highest standards in broadcast measurement research.

For the past 33 years I have had a close relationship with the MRC both as a representative of the provider of television ratings and as a user of those ratings for programming decisions and for setting value on audience delivery. I have worked with 6 different MRC Executive Directors. For the past 33 years I have been driven by the need for quality research and reliable audience estimates. I believe the MRC has been a major contributor to achieving that goal.

The television landscape has changed dramatically from a three network environment to one of multiple broadcast and cable choices. At the same time the United States population has grown and changed to a multicultural population. In order to meet the quality standards of television audience measurement, the samples used to develop audience estimates must accurately represent the current and changing populations of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians not just in total number but demographically within each of those populations.

While the data collection instrument must be designed to accurately collect viewing, no data collection device can eliminate the bias of a reporting sample that does not accurately represent the universe being measured. Television ratings services must make decisions on the data collection tool and methodology which best captures viewing within the cost parameters the individual market can support.

Installing and maintaining a representative sample is difficult. It takes properly trained personnel, adherence to procedures and continuous testing to search for improvements. It requires a commitment to standards. The minimum standards of 1975 no longer meet the challenges of audience measurement in 2005. Quality measurement requires constant third party monitoring to ensure proper procedures are identified and followed. The MRC provides that function through continuing audit and review.

The MRC Television Committee is made up of users of the audience estimates: broadcast networks, cable networks, stations, agencies and advertisers. For the past 6 years I have attended all MRC meetings related to television audience measurement. I strongly believe the MRC audit process has contributed to the continuous improvement of the quality of TV audience measurement. Attendees of these meetings invest a significant amount of time reading and analyzing audit reports. Meetings are long and detailed. They are well attended. No one is allowed to vote without the investment of time in the understanding of the audit issues. Nielsen receives a copy of the audit report prior to distribution to the committee and their comments are included in the report sent to the committee and in the discussion and review of the audit.

New technologies must be audited before being put into production. New editing rules, processing rules, sample design and maintenance procedures should be evaluated and their impact on audience estimates dimensioned prior to implementation to ensure continuation of quality standards. Prior to 2004, I can remember no instance when Nielsen implemented any material changes in methodology, processing rules or data collection device without prior review and acceptance by the MRC.

Nielsen has said in recent public statements that mandatory accreditation would result in termination of the Nielsen Hispanic Station Index (NHSI), the local Hispanic measurement service. While different sampling procedures are used in some NHSI markets, there is no reason to believe they could not either as currently designed or with modifications meet MRC standards or that increasing the Hispanic samples in the NSI service could not provide reliable Hispanic audience estimates.

For approximately 40 years Nielsen's local and national television measurement services have been audited and accredited. Nielsen has met the MRC quality standards and continuously strived for improvement. It has made them a better company and allowed the television industry to grow.

Univision has taken a neutral position on the FAIR Ratings Bill. We take a very strong position on the need for quality samples and procedures for eliminating bias. We take a positive position on the need for MRC audits.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear here today, and I look forward to answering any questions.